



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

IRELAND'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT.

BY EDWARD PORRITT.

IN the period between the American Revolution and the Reform Act of 1832, when the demand for a reform of the British Parliamentary system first became general, it was frequently objected that any addition to England's representation, or any overhauling of the nondescript system of Parliamentary representation in Scotland, would be a serious breach of the Act of Union of 1707. To-day the same argument is advanced against the proposal that Ireland's representation at Westminster, now out of all proportion to her population, shall be reduced.

When Grey and Russell in 1830-32 approached the problem of Parliamentary reform, no heed was given to the argument that a remodelling of the representation would be a breach of the compact between England and Scotland in the reign of Queen Anne. Numerically, Scotland gained by the Reform of 1832. But the old Scotch system was swept away in its entirety. It was entirely changed so far as the representation of the counties was concerned; and, except that the grouping of burghs was partially continued, little was left of the burgh system as it had come down from 1707.

If it was no breach of the Act of Union of 1707 to interfere with the Parliamentary representation of Scotland in 1832, it surely cannot be a breach of the Act of Union of 1800 to alter the Parliamentary representation of Ireland in 1905. It will be much less a breach to deal with Ireland's representation than it was to change the system of Scotland, as was done in 1832; because the Union of 1707 was a compact between two nations, each desirous of union; while the Union of 1800 was just a deal—a vulgar deal, with the borough-owners of Ireland.

It is necessary to use a comparatively new American word to describe these Irish borough-owners. They were "grafters." They were grafters of the worst kind; and they and their predecessors in control of Irish Parliamentary representation—county as well as borough—had been grafters from the Revolution of 1688 to the Union which partially—only partially—made an end to them in 1800. They were of the English garrison in Ireland. For a century preceding the Union they had drawn big pay for garrison service. Much of this pay—between 1700 and 1800, the largest part of it—had come to them through their long and absolute control of the representation; and when they were to be deprived of this control by the Act of Union, they were in a position to extort large sums, in cash down or in control of boroughs and counties which were to send members to the Parliament at Westminster, or in peerages and well-paid offices, as compensation for being deprived of their opportunities for graft.

It was due to these grafters that the Union of Ireland with England had none of the solemnity, the dignity or the statesmanship which marked the Union of Scotland with England, and made the Act of Union of 1707 one of the greatest Parliamentary enactments ever spread on an Anglo-Saxon statute-book.

In 1707 the Union preliminaries were managed by Commissioners openly delegated by each nation. Everything was settled by written communications between the Commissioners. Every minute, every protest and answer exchanged at the Cockpit at Whitehall went on the record. They can all be read to-day in the Acts of Parliaments of Scotland, as published by the Record Commission. At this juncture they should be carefully read by the politicians who are opposing the reduction of Irish representation on the ground that such a reduction would be a breach of the compact of 1800. Along with them should be read the history of the Union of Ireland, which is to be found in the Cornwallis and Castlereagh Correspondence.

These politicians—Irish or English—should note the dignity with which the Lords Commissioners for Scotland demurred to the English proposal that Scotland should have thirty-eight representatives in the House of Commons at Westminster. They should note the persistence with which they pressed for a larger number. They asked for a conference on the question. They had "found such difficulties in that matter," reads their demurrer of

June 11th, 1706, "that they are under the necessity to propose a conference between the Lords Commissioners for the Kingdoms on that subject, in which their Lordships doubt not but to satisfy the Lords Commissioners for England that a greater number than is mentioned in the said proposal will be necessary for attaining the happy union of the two Kingdoms so much desired." The conference took place next day. The Scotch appeal for a larger representation was not at once acceded to; and on the 14th of June, the Scotch Lords Commissioners, through the Earl of Mar, reported that "they found themselves still under an absolute necessity, for bringing to a happy conclusion the Union of the two Kingdoms, to insist that a greater number than thirty-eight be agreed to as the representatives for Scotland in the House of Commons in the Parliament of Great Britain." Scotch persistence carried the point. On the 15th of June the English Commissioners submitted a new proposal. "The Lords Commissioners for England," it reads, "being assured by the Lords Commissioners for Scotland that there will be found insuperable difficulties for reducing the representation of Scotland in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom to thirty-eight members [there were one hundred and fifty representatives of the shires and burghs in the Parliament at Edinburgh], the number formerly proposed, the Lords Commissioners for England do, to show their inclinations to remove everything that would of necessity be an obstruction to perfecting the Union of the two Kingdoms propose to the Lords Commissioners for Scotland that forty-five, and no more, be the number of the representatives for that part of the United Kingdom after the intended union." Three days later the Scotch Commissioners reported that they did not "insist for greater number"; and forty-five was fixed as Scotland's representation by the Articles of Union.

No such official record exists of the preliminaries to the Union with Ireland in 1800. There is absolutely nothing official in print on the subject, except the Acts of the Parliaments in Dublin and at Westminster which brought about the Union. The Irish grafters of 1799-1800 had no mind to follow the precedent of 1706-7 and settle the terms of the Union by Commissioners. A Commission, with records afterwards to be officially published, is the last mode of procedure to commend itself to grafters in any country or in any age. There were no Commissioners for the

Union of Ireland with England; two nations did not come solemnly together to arrive at an understanding, and afterwards to give it binding force by Acts of Parliament. The preliminaries to the Union of 1800 were settled in secret by Pitt and his colleagues in Downing Street, and by Castlereagh and Cornwallis with the Irish grafters in the dark recesses of Dublin Castle.

Most of the bargains were made by Castlereagh, the only Irishman who had ever held the office of Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He made the bargains with the Irish aristocrats who controlled representation in the Irish House of Commons; and sent them to Downing Street for approval and ratification by Pitt. Both Castlereagh and Cornwallis detested and abhorred the dirty business in which they were engaged.

There could be no official record of such preliminaries as went forward in Downing Street and Dublin in 1799 and 1800. But there are extra-official records of these bargains, and official records of some of the transactions—as, for instance, the Act of Parliament voting £1,260,000 to the Irish aristocrats and the Irish Church as compensation for the disfranchisement of 84 out of the 117 boroughs which sent members to the Irish House.

There is also an official report of the Commission which distributed this plunder among the Irish grafters. But the real story of the preliminaries to the Union is to be read in the published correspondence of Castlereagh and Cornwallis. In these four volumes is to be found the most sordid and squalid story in modern British political history. Graft is written large over it all—graft for Ireland's titled and untitled aristocracy; graft for the Irish bar, and for the English Church in Ireland. In 1799-1800 there were no dignified proceedings such as those at the Cockpit at Whitehall in 1706. The two nations did not come into conference through accredited Commissioners, each nation realizing the advantage of union, and each willing to make concessions to bring it about. Pitt was determined on union; and the Irish grafters who controlled representation in the House of Commons were willing to comply on terms—not on terms which should be of advantage to the Irish nation, but for payments made individually to themselves.

Pitt had a varied currency with which to go to market. He could pay cash outright—some from the secret-service fund, and much more by a later vote of the House of Commons at West-

minster. He had titles and honors to bestow, and also civil, judicial and ecclesiastical patronage. Most important of all, he could reward complacent grafters by putting them in control of Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament at Westminster. Not all the grafters demanded their plunder in cash; although Castlereagh's pledge that £15,000 should be paid from the Imperial Treasury, in respect of each Irish borough disfranchised, did more to carry the Union than any consideration of statesmanship or of other private advantage.

In considering the question whether a reduction of the Irish representation in 1905 is a breach of the Union compact, the bargains which fixed the number of Irish members at one hundred are more important than the bribes in cash, offices or titles for which Pitt, through Castlereagh, secured the fee simple of Irish Parliamentary corruption.

In the Castlereagh and Cornwallis correspondence is the fullest record of these bargains and deals. There are other letters and memoirs which throw additional light on them. But the opponents of curtailment will look in vain for any record of statesman-like deliberation over the number of Irish members to be seated in the Imperial Parliament; for any serious discussion of the number of members which Ireland was entitled to on a comparison of her population with that of England. That question was not seriously raised until the bill for the Union was before the House of Commons at Westminster, in April, 1800. Then Grey, who carried the Reform Act of 1832, proposed an instruction to committee, calling for reforms in the English representation and reducing the representation of Ireland from 100 to 85. Only 34 members voted with Grey; and accordingly nothing came of his proposed instruction to the committee.

If Grey's instruction had been carried, it would have wrecked the whole scheme of deals and bargains with which Castlereagh had been busy for the preceding eighteen months. Irish representation at Westminster was a most important part of the currency he had to pay out when making his bargains with the grafters in Dublin. At the outset he asked for 126 members as Ireland's quota in the Imperial Parliament. While he wanted 126 members, he firmly insisted that with fewer than 100 he could not make his payments to the Irish grafters. There were 300 members in the Irish House of Commons.

At an early stage in the negotiations it was suggested by the Duke of Portland, who had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, that none of the 117 Irish boroughs need be disfranchised. Portland's idea was that the Irish boroughs should be grouped after the manner of the Scotch burghs for election of Members to the House of Commons at Westminster. For a brief period Castlereagh turned this proposal over in his mind. But he quickly realized that it was not a scheme that would recommend itself to the rapacious grafters with whom he was negotiating for the Union.

The control of an Irish borough was a certain fortune for a needy Irish aristocrat who knew how to market his political wares at Dublin Castle. For a bishop, the control of a borough meant transference to a more wealthy see. For a baron or a viscount, the control of three or four boroughs—the ability to nominate six or eight men to the House of Commons—meant a marquissate or an earldom, a bishopric for a son or nephew, and control of civil, legal and ecclesiastical patronage in half a province.

Castlereagh better than any of his predecessors—for he was an Irishman and before the Union never long out of Ireland—knew all this. He knew it better than Pitt or Portland; much better even than Cornwallis, who at this time was Lord Lieutenant. Castlereagh knew that a third interest in the control of a group of boroughs electing one member to the House of Commons at Westminster, would be of no value as compared with the complete and sole control of a borough electing two members to the Parliament at Dublin; and he was forced to devise a scheme whereby the representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament would form a valuable part of the currency at his disposal for the grafters.

Questions of population gave Castlereagh no concern, until he was nearly at the end of his odious task—until it had been determined that only 33 Irish cities and boroughs should be represented at Westminster. Then statistics of the Hearth and Window Taxes were requisitioned to determine which of the Irish boroughs should survive as Parliamentary units. Population statistics did not trouble Castlereagh at the stage of the bargaining of which I am now writing. His urgent exigencies demanded 100 members from Ireland in the Imperial Parliament. Many of the more powerful grafters controlled county representation as well as boroughs; for in 1799 Roman Catholics had been

enfranchised for six years, and the possibility of exploiting the Catholic forty-shilling freeholder voters had already been fully realized by the county bosses. Castlereagh had to buy off their hostility to the Union as well as that of the borough-owners. So it was reported from Dublin Castle to Downing Street—presumably, though not certainly, by Castlereagh—that a third interest in an election was “of so awkward a description that it would be held in little estimation by the borough-owners.”

In the long run, Castlereagh had his way, both with regard to the number of Irish members to have seats in the House of Commons, and to the distribution of electoral power between the Irish counties and the Irish boroughs. But his plan was not based on Ireland's population, nor on any contribution she was to make to the Imperial Treasury. If Castlereagh had had a secret-service fund which was bottomless; if he could have been more lavish with pledges of peerages and promotions in the peerage; or if he had had limitless patronage at his disposal, he might not have had to make the stand he did for one hundred members.

Representation in the Imperial Parliament, with the certainty that the men who had controlled county elections and borough elections to the Parliament at Dublin should control elections to Westminster, was part of Castlereagh's most valuable currency. He needed all that he could obtain of this kind of currency; and this fact, rather than any understanding between the two countries—any agreement worthy the name of a treaty or compact, or to be compared for a single moment with the compact made by the English and Scotch Commissioners in 1706—was responsible for the 100 members allotted to Ireland at the Union.

I have given close attention to the history and working of the Irish Parliament—representation it could not be called; for, as the Duke of Rutland, when Lord Lieutenant, wrote to Pitt in 1784, the Parliamentary system of Ireland “does not bear the smallest resemblance to representation.” I have sought for everything in print and in MS. that concerns the Union; and I have yet to find any evidence that either Pitt or Castlereagh imagined in 1799-1800 that they were making a compact which should be regarded as sacred—that they were determining for all time that the number of Ireland's representatives at Westminster should never under any conditions fall below 100.

EDWARD PORRITT.